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Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Juichi **Takahara** (Japan)

Programme questions: evaluation (item 4 (c))

In-depth evaluation of the electoral assistance programme

1. At its 2nd and 3rd meetings, on 7 June 1999, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of United Nations electoral assistance, transmitted under cover of a note by the Secretary-General (E/AC.51/1999/3 and Corr.1).

2. The representative of the Secretary-General responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. The view was expressed that the quality, scope and comprehensiveness of the report were satisfactory. The view was expressed that the report should have focused on the real work of the Organization on electoral assistance, instead of devoting too much time to the work and norms of other intergovernmental organizations on the matter.

4. Concerns and doubts were expressed with regard to the legislative mandate for changing, in the report, the priority of the electoral assistance programme without a clear mandate by the General Assembly. In this regard, it was recalled that, in the medium-term plan, it had been clearly stated that the main objective of this programme was to render electoral assistance to Member States upon request and in accordance with the relevant decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

5. It was observed that there should be a clearer division of responsibilities among agencies of the United Nations system to avoid duplication of effort and overlapping

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responsibilities. It was stated that the role of the Electoral Assistance Division should focus on areas where the Division enjoyed a comparative advantage. The view was expressed that the report did not sufficiently clarify the role played by the Division in providing assistance in the field, in contrast to the role played by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which had been made clearer. The view was also expressed that there was a need to update the role that the Electoral Assistance Division should play in the light of the changing needs of countries.

6. The view was expressed that the Electoral Assistance Division should lead the United Nations electoral assistance activities and regrets were expressed regarding the long interregnum between the departure of the first Director of the Division, who retired in 1995, and the appointment of his successor in 1998. In this context, the role of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs as the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance activities was reaffirmed.

7. With respect to resources and funding, the view was expressed that electoral assistance activities initiated by the United Nations should be funded through the regular budget. It was noted that the report failed to clarify how some electoral assistance activities were funded and gave the impression that the United Nations was funding them in their entirety. It was also pointed out that more information should be presented about the different types of electoral assistance given, especially when they were innovative.

8. Disappointment was expressed that, of the 68 countries that had received electoral assistance, only two were specifically mentioned as having been successful cases.

9. The scarcity of internal assessments used in the report was noted and it was suggested that, while external assessments could be used as background information, it was not appropriate to include these in the report.

10. In the course of the debate, the following observations and reservations were expressed concerning the recommendations:

Recommendation 1. Doubts were expressed as to whether the reference to post-election assistance was based on an accurate interpretation of the mandates. The role of the United Nations Development Programme was recalled. The view was expressed that the United Nations-United Nations Development Programme guidelines referred to in the report had not been approved by the General Assembly. The view was also expressed that there was no mandate defining specific functions of the Electoral Assistance Division when providing post-election assistance and that the issue was yet to be decided by the General Assembly.

Recommendation 2. Reservations were expressed on recommendation 2, since there were doubts about the mandate behind the proposals. The view was also expressed that implementation of recommendation 2 would restrict the activity of the Electoral Assistance Division.

Recommendation 2 (d). Support was expressed for the coordination and facilitation of lessons learned, but the use of the term "democratization activities" was questioned in reference to established mandates. It was pointed out that the experience of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with respect to setting up a well-performing Lessons Learned Unit could be used as a model by the Electoral Assistance Division.

Recommendation 2 (f). While support was expressed for the mainstreaming of gender issues, the view was expressed that the matter should have been discussed more substantively in the context of electoral assistance.

Recommendation 2 (g). The view was expressed that extrabudgetary funds would be appropriate to fund certain activities, but that needs assessment missions should be funded

through the regular budget. Concern was expressed that over-reliance on extrabudgetary funding might delay the democratization process in countries which could not attract sufficient voluntary contributions. The view was expressed that, given the importance of the electoral assistance programme, regular budget resources should be increased. The view was expressed that, in accordance with the mandate of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, which was established in resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994, the Office should not make budgetary recommendations.

Recommendation 3. Support was expressed for a broad agreement among the various offices and programmes involved in order to achieve an integrated approach to providing electoral assistance through a more streamlined and coherent division of responsibilities under the leadership of the Electoral Assistance Division. The view was also expressed that recommendation 3, in its present formulation, would lead to micro-management. The view was expressed that the agreement on the allocation of responsibilities within the United Nations should not cover procedures for handling requests by Member States.

Conclusions and recommendations

11. There was agreement in the Committee on the continued importance and relevance of the programme on electoral assistance.

12. In general, strong support was expressed for this subprogramme. It was recognized that the role of the Electoral Assistance Division was of great importance for the Organization, and that it had been successful in the 1990s in providing electoral assistance to countries undergoing their first round of elections.

13. The Committee recommended approval of recommendation 1, on the understanding that its implementation would be in accordance with subprogramme 1.3 of the medium-term plan.

14. The Committee recommended approval of recommendation 2 (a) to (d), (f) and (g), on the understanding that:

(a) With regard to 2 (d), lessons learned from democratization activities would be included only to the extent that those activities enjoyed mandates;

(b) Regarding 2 (g), over-reliance on extrabudgetary funding should be avoided to the extent possible.

15. The Committee recommended approval of recommendation 3, on the understanding that the allocation of respective responsibilities should be in accordance with the relevant provisions of the medium-term plan.